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194 197 meanings if spoken in different tones. For example, the syllable *Meh* may mean 'eye', 'sand', 'tail', 'mole' (or the body), or 'tooth', according to the tone in which it is uttered.

● 538 173 Originally the Karens had a mass of unwritten bardic literature, poems and stories handed down orally and recited around the fireplaces, from generation to generation. Some of these were epic poems which related the history of their race, and others folk stories which they told for amusement and which served to keep alive the traditions of their tribes. Many of these stories were much like the Negro folk tales told in America under the title of "Uncle Remus Stories", or like Grimms' Fairy Tales in Europe. In these Karen folk stories the rabbit figures as the wily one as it does in the Negro tales, and as the fox appears in the European stories.

538 773 524 177 Their epic poems have remarkable accounts of the creation of the world by *Ywa*, who closely resembles the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. They tell of the origin of the human race and the expulsion from a garden, which is similar to the story of Paradise Lost. The poems are in five stress lines and are in couplet form like Hebrew poetry. In their earlier days there use to be rhyming contests or "capping rhymes" as an important part of gatherings such as wedding and funeral feasts. At present they only survive among the most primitive villages away from outside influences.

197 212 There are many dialects of the Karen language—probably about twenty of them. They fall into six groups: the Sgaw, Pwo, Bwè, Padaung, Karenni and Zayein. The Sgaw and Pwo are the two largest groups. These are the two which have been used in education and in

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Mr. Brayton a little later did the same for the Pwo dialect. The desire to read and to have an education arose among the Karens who became Christians, and as the Sgaw tribe has come into the Christian Church in much larger numbers than the Pwo it has consequently developed a larger literature. The greater part of this is of a distinctly Christian nature, designed to promote the spiritual life as well as to give general information. The people have not had time to create a modern literature of their own although a small beginning had been made before the Japanese invasion. No doubt out of the hardships of these war years a new literature will be born.

VII

DRESS

The Karens had a distinctive dress in their primitive state. Not only was there a national style but each individual village in the hills had its distinctive variations which marked a man's origin.

The general dress of the Karens was an uncut garment made by sewing together two breadths of cloth as they came from the rude loom, leaving a hole in the middle of one end for the head and two small holes at the upper corners for the arms. It was made of their own home-grown cotton, which was raised, carded, spun and woven, as well as dyed, by their women-folk. The ground was usually white as it came unbleached from the loom. They interwove decorations of red and sometimes of black.

Among the Sgaw Karens the smock (called a *Hsay*) was white with a wide lower border of red. The garment reached from the shoulders to the calves and was the only bit of clothing worn. It was large and

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177 fallen. They told a story to illustrate this, for they spoke
181 in parables in order to explain many of the situations in which they found themselves.

● 538 They said they were like a family which built their little hut for a shelter while cultivating a hillside. There the children and the old sow and her piglets were left while the parents went off over the hillside to cut the jungle and make their clearing. One day a tiger came in and grabbed the sow and carried her off, much to the distress of the children. When the parents returned in the evening they were told what had happened and the father determined to put the children and piglets up on a high bamboo platform out of reach of the tiger before they went to their work the next morning.

The tiger returned and finding no prey within reach set up a howl as he vainly tried to jump to the platform. The children stood it as long as they could and then threw down a pig to appease the beast. This they did at intervals while all the time they were longing to hear the twang of the father's bowstring that would send an arrow quivering through the heart of the tiger. This, the Karens said, represented their condition as they waited for the "white brother" to come and free them from the slavery to evil spirits and give them the Book that would enable them to hold up their heads among the peoples of Burma.

177 Under the impulse of Christianity the desire for
181 education was strong from the beginning of the contact
797 of the Karens with the Westerners. They wanted to read their own Book and to have a broader education. They demanded to be taught the English language. The early missionaries desired only to train them for a more abundant life in their own country and for a time refused to teach

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gious ideas and Buddhism and Christianity has led some to try to make syntheses of these various teachings. So-called "prophets" have tried to set themselves up as leaders in these developments. But none of them has made a very lasting impression on the people as a whole. Of these the Klibopah and the Ko San Ye movements were probably the most important. The remnants of the latter group have their centre in a large village, Padoplaw, near Nyaunglebin. One of the sons of a former leader, Saw Johnson Po Min, led them into an atheistic movement from which came some of those who were of uncertain loyalty at the time of the Japanese invasion. As compared with the large body of Karens who were unitedly loyal to the government and the religion in which they had found strength, they were a very small group.

Many Karens who qualified as teachers left their own homes and went as pioneers to Upper Burma, and to the outlying tribes such as the Chins, Kachins, Shans, Lahus, and Yawyins and, fired with unselfish zeal, have given their lives for what is really missionary work in preaching and teaching these tribes. During the Third Burmese War, when American missionaries had to leave the Kachin country, these Karen teachers stayed on and did effective work in laying the foundations for a new regime among them.

The development of education among the Karens helped to produce books to take the place of the old oral bard literature. In the beginning many of these books were written by the missionaries; but as time went on there grew up Karens who had a desire to contribute to the growth of their people and these have written a number of very acceptable works. In 1841 a newspaper in Karen,

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177 called "The Morning Star", was established by Dr. Mason
538 in Tavoy. This was the oldest vernacular newspaper in
204 Burma, with a continuous history up to the time its publication was stopped by the Japanese occupation. It was cut off when it was about to celebrate its centenary.

177 The Karens were carrying on work of research,
875 medical practice, and other scientific branches in which they were showing real ability. There were Karen lecturers in the University.

177 The churches established by the missionaries had
794 become self-supporting. No money was being paid from
871 America for regular church work among the Karens, with the exception of grants for a few schools and for pioneering work among outlying tribes. They had their own associational organizations in which the churches of a district were combined and the stronger made contributions to help the weaker, to support their Theological Training School at Insein, to maintain town schools which were conducted with boarding departments for the benefit of the whole district, and to subsidize evangelistic work in distant places.

177 The Baptist churches among the Karens combined
795 with the churches of other peoples in Burma to form the Burma Baptist Convention. Their annual meetings were often attended by as many as three or four thousand delegates and were sources of inspiration as well as opportunities to plan for further work. The Karens shared the honours of president and officers with Burmans and others. Among other churches such as the Anglican and Roman Catholic which conducted work among the Karens, they had their conferences and carried on their work according to the genius of their own church.

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pended on. I have known not a few Government officials who, by such methods, have won the confidence and earnest support of the people with whom they were dealing. It is unfortunate, however, that the number of such officers is not larger. While the Karen have not always been treated with proper consideration and have sometimes failed to understand the aims and methods of the British Government, they are deeply attached to it.

It is true that the Karen are not as quick-witted as some of the other races of the Orient. Nevertheless, they are in some respects out-distancing their more facile neighbors. They excel in the routine of their daily tasks. This is observable in the schools, where the Karen boys usually take the lead in the daily recitations, but make a poorer showing in the written and oral examinations. Several Government officers have spoken in high terms of their Karen clerks, commending their faithfulness and honesty. Not infrequently it happens that such a faithful worker finds that some astute associate has gained the credit and reward that should have been his. The Karen are not blind to disappointments of this sort, as the following fable shows: A man, about to leave home, ordered his pig and dog to prepare a plot of ground for planting as a garden. The pig was industrious and rooted until he had all but finished turning over the plot, while the dog spent his time lying under a tree. Late in the afternoon, before the master's return, the dog jumped up and scratched about here and there in the soft earth. When he heard his master coming, he ran barking down the path to meet him and told him that the pig had been working but a short time, while he had been digging all day. The faithful pig, meanwhile, was so busy rooting in the farthest corner of the lot, trying to finish before his owner's return, that he knew nothing of what was going on. The credulous man believed the dog's deceitful words, killed the pig, and only discovered his mistake when it was too late. This fable is epitomized in the proverb, "The dog scratches in the pig's place." For many a Karen this is all too true.

Early writers speak of the peaceableness, honesty, and goodness of the Karen.[1] There are, of course, in every nation those who belie any statement concerning the people as a whole. However, I have no hesitation in saying that deceit and trickery are not common among the Karen. I have been told by peddlers and others, who often have to carry valuable goods and money into the jungle, that

[1] Sangermano, *Description of the Burmese Empire, 1783-1808*, (Rangoon, 1833) p. 96; Hal Snodgrass, *The Narrative of the Burmese War*, (London, 1827) Vol. I, p. 142.

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of the noun to which it refers. Its use is similar to our saying in English "cattle, five head," or "bread, four loaves."

The verb is almost always considered transitive and, if there should be no word that could properly stand as its object, the nominal pronoun "ta" is added to supply it. The verb "to be" takes the objective case. The double negative is used with the verb after the manner of the French and Burmese idiom, "t'—ba" corresponding to the Burmese "m—bu."

The Karen numerals are based on the decimal system not only from one to ten, but also upwards by tens and hundreds to tens of millions. There is, however, a marked peculiarity in the Bwe method of counting from six to nine, six being three couples; seven, three couples-one; eight, four couples, and nine, four couples-one.

The Pwo dialect does not differ materially from the Sgaw in structure, or greatly in vocabulary, as shown by a comparison of the two by Dr. Wade, which indicates that thirteen-fourteenths of the words of the Sgaw and Pwo are from the same roots. For one familiar only with the Sgaw dialect there is difficulty in immediately understanding the Pwo, because the nasals affect the pronunciation of the latter. The Bwe and other Toungoo dialects seem to have nasals and wide variations in tones. They also possess letters that are lacking in the Sgaw, such as g, j, z, and a peculiar dj that is impossible to represent in English letters. The Mopgha have the letter f, which they pronounce highly aspirated.[1] The Sgaw have no g, j, v, or z. They have both the aspirated and unaspirated k, t, and p. Besides these consonants, they have gutterals and combined consonants to which there are no parallels in Western speech.[2]

Although in the early days the Karen had no written language, it is not to be inferred that they were without a literature. On the contrary, a large quantity of bard literature was handed down orally from generation to generation, being taught by certain elders to the youths who were arriving at maturity, in order that they might transmit it in turn without change to those coming after them. This literature comprises probably more than two hun-

[1] Dr. Mason in the *Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1854, Vol. I, Pt. II, pp. 120, ff.

[2] The Grammar of the Karen language by Dr. Wade, now reprinted at the American Baptist Missionary Press, Rangoon, Burma, and that by Dr. Gilmore, from which the writer has largely derived his materials for this chapter, are available for those who wish to make a study of the language. *The Karen Thesaurus*, an encyclopedic dictionary of the Karen language, people, and customs, is a valuable work. Volume I of the new edition, which appeared in 1915, is especially useful, as it contains definitions in English such as are not to be found in the later volumes.

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538 dred tales, legends, and mythical stories. A large proportion of these are in the nature of beast tales or fables, such as are found in India, Europe, and Africa. Some of the myths and legends are in the form of verse and were formerly recited at length at funerals and on other festal occasions, or were sung to the accompaniment of the harp. There are also the epics containing the "Y'wa" legends. Finally, a considerable amount of wise instruction is contained in the numerous short sayings, proverbs, and riddles that have survived. Fragments of the shorter and longer poems, chanted at funerals, have been quoted in the chapter on Funeral Customs, and some of the tales and myths have been referred to or paraphrased in other portions of this work. Further presentation and discussion of the Karen literature is reserved for a future study.

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A Karen Belle
Though not particularly handsome, many of the Karen maidens are very attractive.

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Concerning their origin much that is legendary has been written. In the *Karen Thesaurus* we are told in substance that these drums ("klo oh tra oh") are very expensive and are owned in Lower Burma by a few very wealthy persons, who make offerings of food and liquor to them annually, fearing an early death if they fail to do this. The drums are said by some to have been brought from the "K' wa" country and by others from the "Swa" tribe.[2] Those who went to buy these objects paid according to the number of frogs on them, the price of one with two frogs being twenty rupees. The buyer put down the price and took away the drum, after which the owner came and got his money. If the buyer did not leave the money, he risked losing his way and being overtaken and eaten by the owner. The drums are used in making a noise like that of a gong.[3]

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Dr. Francis Mason, writing at Toungoo in 1868, speaks of these drums under the name of "kyee-zees," and is better informed than the writer in the *Thesaurus* in saying that they are obtained from the Shan. He also states that the Karen distinguish ten different kinds of drums according to sound and have a different name for each kind. Dr. Mason tells us that the best-sounding drums are worth a thousand rupees apiece, while the poorest bring only one hundred each. Dr. Mason continues: "The possession of Kyee-zees is what constitutes a rich Karen. No one is considered rich without one, whatever may be his other possessions. Everyone who has money endeavors to turn it into Kyee-zees, and a village that has many of them is the envy of the other villages and it is often the cause of wars to obtain possession of them." [4]

534 [173]

Some of the Karens have told me that in the beginning these drums were obtained from the "Yu" people, who seem to have been the Jung or Yung who occupied Yunnan in ancient times.[5] Indeed, various indications point to the probability that the drums existed or were in use in Yunnan when the ancestors of the Karen passed through there from their home in western China into Burma,

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[2] The Swa are mentioned in some of the old Karen tales and appear to have been wild cannibals, of whom but little was known. Their location seems uncertain. Some of the tales place them beyond the great waters, while others suggest that they live to the north. Probably the references are to the Waer, who are one of the head-hunting tribes still living in the northern Shan States, on the Chinese frontier.

[3] *The Karen Thesaurus*, 1847, Vol. I, pp. 227, ff.

[4] *Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1868, Vol. XXXVII, Pt. II, pp. 128, ff.

[5] Mr. Taw Sein Ko, in *Annual Archæological Report*, Burma, 1917, pp. 22. 23. Mr. Po Lin Te writes in the *Rangoon Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1919, that the Yu were the oldest of five families who emigrated from the Sandy River and were, therefore, entitled to use the drums.

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623 626 671 867 inhabitants of such a community were without proper guidance in the conduct of their affairs. They were left unaided by the experience of the past. The elders in the properly instructed villages were the custodians of the ancient laws, which they were not supposed to change but were expected to transmit exactly as they had received them.

67 538 577 571 The form in which these laws have been handed down is illustrated by the following saying on love:

"Children and grandchildren, love one another. Do not quarrel; do not find fault with each other. When we are in the village we are separate persons, but when we go to clear the fields we are brethren; and if one is taken sick on the road or in the jungle, we must take care of him. We must look after each other. When we cut the fields we are brethren. If one is sick, all are sick. If one dies, all die; and we must carry his body back to his house and lay it in the hall, that his brethren may see and his wife and his children may see that he is dead."

Other sayings of the elders are expressed in language similar to that just quoted and deal with such subjects as industry, indolence, helping the poor, widows and orphans, evil-doers, duty to parents, humility, swearing, covetousness, partiality, backbiting, hatred, quarreling, falsehood, oppression, theft, exacting fines, killing, famines, etc. Each saying or precept is in the verbose style of the one given above, telling the younger generations what they should or should not do. Dr. Mason has recounted these various sayings at length, as they were reported to him by a member of the Bwe group of Karen tribes. The sayings thus recorded are found to be similar to those handed down among the Sgaw and other tribes. It is worthy of remark that few of the elders on the plains [178] can repeat them at the present time. Dr. Mason's record covers some twenty pages in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, but I shall content myself with calling attention to a few salient points in the precepts.

538 671 577 The one on famines has but little of direct import to say about that specific subject. It reminds the "children" that the elder has seen much of life and its vicissitudes, including fires, floods, plagues of rats, and massacres by Burmans and Talaigns. He has seen one man invite another to a meal, in order to accuse him of stealing his food and thus have an excuse for selling him into slavery. He has seen a bronze drum exchanged for a sheaf of paddy

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and a basket of grain sold for a basket of money. He has seen the people dig unhealthy yams and suffer from eating them. In the last three statements the elder is clearly showing the effects of a great scarcity of grain, both on the price one had to pay for food and on the people who were reduced to the necessity of eating bad food. His reference to fires, floods, plagues, and massacres seem intended to suggest the causes of some of the famines that have come under his observation. Notwithstanding the importance of the subject he is dealing with, the elder addresses no exhortation to his hearers, except by implication. 538 671 577

The precept on indolence is full of moralizing. It condemns laziness and enjoins hard work in order to obtain paddy. It teaches the people to do their work with cheerfulness and gladness, as also thoroughly and well. "We love happiness," says the precept, "and our greatest happiness is to clear our fields and build our houses. Everything is in the earth. Work hard with the hoe to dig it out, and one can buy drums and silver and other things. It is better to work for wealth than to obtain it by raids and forays." This saying overlooks neither the spiritual nor material rewards of labor. 538 671 461

The precept on helping the poor, as well as those on fornication and adultery, contain references to famine, indicating that periods of extreme dearth of food must have been of frequent occurrence among the Karen. Fornication and adultery are dreadful sins because, among other reasons, they produce bad crops and scarcity of game. In times of famine the rich should help the poor, but the obligation of the former to the latter seems to stop there, so far as the sayings of the elders go. The admonition to help the poor is as follows: 671 538 735 684

"Children and grandchildren, work, every one of you, and be prepared for a time of famine. Then, when a time of scarcity or famine comes, let not the rich and those who have all the rice and paddy reject the poor who have nothing, that you may not lose your honor and be abused, but may be honored and respected. When hard times come and there is famine amongst you, let the wealthy help those who have nothing with which to buy and who can not borrow."

In a similar vein the people are urged to care for widows and orphans lest other countries, hearing of their mistreatment of their helpless ones, shall abuse them and call them poverty-stricken. Even if there are rich men among them, others will not 671 538 736

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believe it. This precept does not appear to have been well observed in practice.[2]

Love of peace is enjoined, because it conduces to happiness, long life, and prosperity. The daughters of one who loves peace,

DIPPING WATER FROM A SHALLOW STREAM
These little girls are all wearing the single white "hse," but the men have their loins girded up after the Burmese fashion.

the people are assured, will conduct themselves with propriety, and his sons will live happily. Evil-doers are doomed to ruin and disaster. Their "drums will become the property of others, their daughters will become slaves, and their sons, servants. Their lands will be destroyed, and their country will come to destruction. Evil-doers do not live to grow old."

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The section relating to duties to parents recounts the many cares of parents and enlarges on the expenditure of strength and sympathy by the mother in behalf of her children. The deduction set forth is that children should care for their parents when they grow old and provide them with food and drink. Those who fail in the performance of such filial duties will suffer for their sin, and

[2] See pp. 134, 288.

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their work will not bring success. They will become sickly, weak, and helpless. 671 538 593

The virtue of humility is extolled at length, as one who knows the Karen people might expect. The people are told that he who does not humble himself but exalts himself, who regards his relatives with disdain, makes forays, is extortionate, beats others for nothing, and, in general, does as he pleases, will die young. Such a man will be punished by the Lord of heaven, losing his drums and money, being left wretched and childless, unable to work, without means to purchase anything, and to die without apparent cause. 671 538 576 571 152 789

Cursing is condemned, and its retributive consequences are shown in the story of a man who was the father of ten children and cursed one of his brethren without a reason. The curse did not harm the one on whom it was pronounced, but reacted upon the other, causing the death of every one of his children. Among the other evils denounced and forbidden are covetousness, partiality, backbiting, hatred, quarreling, falsehood, and exacting fines for the infringement of arbitrary rules or for trespass on one's property. The condemnation of such vices, as well as the encouragement of mutual helpfulness, filial piety, generosity to the needy and helpless, and fear of punishment by the Lord of heaven, show that the Karen had no mean standards of personal conduct. Whether these ideals were lived up to or not is another question. In fact, cursing a person by whom one had been injured was a recognized form of retaliation and punishment. It was necessary to go to his house, stand in front of his door, and recite certain verses imprecating him. The person venting his wrath must do this three evenings in succession, taking with him on the third evening an expiring fagot, an addled egg, and the scrapings from the dish out of which the pigs are fed. On this occasion he closes his imprecation with the words: "May his life go out like this dying fagot. May he be without posterity like this egg. May his end be like the refuse of the dishes."

Theoretically, the principle of the old Mosaic law of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye was valid among the Karen, but it was tempered in the sayings of the elders as follows: "In order not to subject ourselves to fines and punishment, we must allow others to treat us as they choose. If we are struck, we must not strike again. If one strikes your head, strike the floor. If some one blinds you, do not blind him in return. The long is before; the short is behind [that is, the future is long; the past is short]. Love of 681 627 577

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appease the Lord of heaven and earth and to find out the guilty persons.

On the subject of stealing the exhortation of the elders was not to steal, destroy, defraud, or act dishonestly. Such deeds are by no means secret. Even though unconfessed, they become manifest in the ordeal by water and in that of ascending a tree. The God of heaven sees. The Lord of the mountains and hills, "Thi Hko Mü Xa," sees. If one is hungry, one should work, should bend the back. If one wants fish, one should use the hand-net. If one desires game, let one repair to the jungle for it. Families are to be fed in this way, not by stealing or by running into debt.

A person who had been caught stealing might be let off, if it was his first offense and he restored the stolen property and promised to reform. If, however, he became a confirmed thief, he was sold into slavery. In some parts of the Toungoo district it was not uncommon for one guilty of stealing to pay the penalty with his life. If positive proof was lacking and there was doubt as to his guilt, the ordeal by water was resorted to.

Murder was, of course, utterly condemned in the sayings of the elders, for "man is not like the beasts. He has a Lord and Master. We are the children of Thi Hko, of Y'wa who created us. Therefore, do not kill one another." The murderer will be surrendered to the Lord of the lands and will be put to death. He can not escape. His body will be left naked in the fields, and the vultures will devour it. "These things," the elders declare, "have we seen with our own eyes, and we know them, and they have often happened among us." However, the circumstances under which a murder was committed were taken into account. A homicide at a drunken feast was considered an accident, for it was thought that the one guilty of the crime would not have committed it had he been sober. No cause for an action existed in such a case.

Men killed while taking part in a foray were to be redeemed, that is, a fine was to be paid for them, unless the leader had been excused from such payment in advance.[4] Likewise, the accidental death of a man during a trading, hunting, or other trip undertaken at the request of another, was chargeable to the latter, because otherwise it would not have occurred.

The recognized way of bringing to justice an offender who was accused of causing the death of another, was for the near relatives

[4] See p. 157.

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repeated calls, "tauk-te, tauk-te, tauk-te," of the ubiquitous gecko" 857
or spotted lizard, which lives in hollow trees and sometimes in the 524
houses, they count off "richman, poorman, beggarman, thief," etc., in the playful attempt to discover to which of these groups their future husbands will belong, just as maidens in English-speaking countries count the petals of a daisy for the same purpose. They participate in running games, such as "tag," repeating rhymes in counting out the players and choosing the one who is to be "it." When the players are about to be counted out, they all squat on the ground near the one who is to say over the ditty, with their right fists extended in a circle. She strikes each fist as she utters a syllable, and the one whose hand is struck at the final word becomes the new leader or victim in the game.

There are many of these ditties in use by the children, some of 857
which are composed of words which originally may have had mean- 524
ings that are now lost, while some may be simply a string of reso- 538
nant syllables like our own "eeny, meeny, miny, mo." One of these rhymes, which was written down for me in the Pegu Hills, runs as follows:

"T' ku, hki ku, paw ta lu, saw maw ku ku li, lu t' re, maw ku ta [539]
aw yu."

Others, however, take the form of a narrative, for example, the following which speaks of a Burmese Buddhist monk ("pongyi"), an object of terror to the Karen children. Hence, they say:

"Hop kyi klo hko neu weh lo
Leh aw hsa leu ta lu hko.
Pla wa law teh, hseh ba a hko."

Translated, this reads:

"The 'pongyi' with close shaven head, miserably hungry,
Went to eat his food on the ridge.
The unpoisoned arrow falls and pierces his head."

The children have other little songs which they use in play as, for instance, when in the villages on the plains they run on the logs laid from house to house to serve as walks during the heavy rains. One of their verses is:

"Paw paw to me law ten to di do." [539]

Another version of this is:

"Paw paw pgha me law teh pgha di do."

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The translation of the former is:

"Walk, walk the bridge. If it falls the bigger it is," meaning the bigger the bridge, the greater the fall. The rendering of the latter is:

"Walk, walk, the bigger the man, the greater the fall."

When playing with the chickens, children sometimes catch one of them and pretend to rock it to sleep, droning the while:

"Hsaw hpo, mi, mi.
N' mo n' pa leh hsu Yo.
Heh ke so ne na p' theh tha wa ko lo.
Aw gha lo gha lo.
Me aw, hsaw hpo."

The translation of this runs,

"Sleep, sleep, little chick,
Your mother and father have gone to Shanland.
They will come back, bringing you a supply of
white betel-nuts.
You can eat them one by one.
Sleep, little chick."

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Both boys and girls play with the seeds of the giant creeper ("maw keh"). These seeds, which are often two inches in diameter, look much like flattened horse-chestnuts or buckeyes. They come from the enormous pods, a yard or more in length, of the vine, *Estada pusoetha*, which grows a hundred yards or over along the tops of the forest trees.[6] The games in which these seeds are used are played in the dry season. An even number of players is required, divided into two equal groups or "sides." Each side must have the same number of seeds, which are made to stand on their edges by being set in grooves in the hard earth. The rows thus formed are from eight to ten feet apart, according to the age of the children playing. One player begins by spinning a "shooter" at the opposite row, aiming to knock down one or more of the nuts in it. Whether he succeeds or not, his opponent takes his turn, and the players thus shoot alternately back and forth, until one row or the other is entirely knocked over. The winning side is, of course, the one that first demolishes the other's row.

In another game played with these seeds the two sides are again equal in the number of players. However, only those on one side

[6] Burmese children also play with these seeds.

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tween their hoped-for offspring, although such an agreement might be made at any time during the growth of the children. Such a pact was considered firmly binding on those concerned. The children might or might not be told of the arrangement. Later on, at any rate, the youth would learn of it; and it was expected, when the proper time came, that he would seek out his betrothed, even if she was then living in a distant village. Thra Than Bya tells of a couple who were thus affianced while living on the banks of the Irrawaddy River. During hard times the girl's parents removed from one place to another, until at length they settled near Moulmein. When the youth had reached man's estate, his father told him of his engagement and sent him to seek his betrothed. Knowing only her name and that of her father, he traced them from village to village until, arriving at the place where they then dwelt, the chief confirmed the fact and consented to the young man's entering into a rhyming contest with the maiden, when she should arrive at the feast that was being held there. Retiring into the jungle, the youth got himself up in disheveled array, returned, and addressed the damsel in poetic language, explaining briefly his mission. She repelled his attentions; but he persisted, saying that she belonged to him by right of their childhood betrothal. Thereupon she besought her parents to save her from such an undesirable husband. They imposed the condition that she should surpass him in the rhyming contest. Failing in the attempt, she humbled herself and invited him to her house, where her parents proceeded to celebrate her wedding with a great feast.[1]

Feasts, especially funeral-feasts, were the occasions at which youths and maidens met. They used to go to such gatherings in companies, each with its leader who was skilled in reciting or extemporizing simple verses. Being thus thrown together, couples often became engaged, pledging themselves in verses like the following:

Youth: "I promise you, you promise me.
We have promised each other."

Maiden: "After you have promised me and do not come,
Cotton will grow on your grave.
If you agree and do not come,
Paddy will grow over your tomb."

[1] In the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1866, Dr. Mason mentions similar customs as existing among the Karens of Tounguo.

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Youth: "We are pledging each other before the dead.
We shall not be worthy of offspring."

If later during the same festival either one of the pair wished to break the betrothal, they addressed each other in verse, saying:

"We promise each other in rhyme.
Now let us speak verse again.
May evil not come upon us,
Or upon our descendants."

Such verses are called "hta thi kwaw." Unless an engagement thus made was broken off the same night, the young man was under obligation to send a mediator to arrange for the wedding within a short time. If he failed to keep his pledge, his strength to resist an evil charm ("so"), would lapse, and he would go, it was thought, into a decline.

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Many of these practices still obtain among the Karen in the outlying hill-country; and in choosing a bride no step would be taken without divination by the customary method of inspecting the chicken bones, except in the case of the betrothals effected by the young people themselves at the funeral-feasts. It sometimes happens that a young man, seeing a maiden who attracts him, mentions the circumstance to his parents, who approve his choice and send a mediator to her parents with an offer of marriage. As the services of a confidant are required sooner or later in nearly all cases, the omens are consulted and must prove favorable before he proceeds on his mission.[1] If on his way he should chance on anything that is inauspicious, such as the gliding of a snake across his path, the barking of a deer, or the report of a death, he will return home. Otherwise, he continues his journey to the house of the young woman's parents. The conversation that takes place there is carried on in verse characterized by figures of speech which suggest, but do not state explicitly, the purpose for which the mediator came. On entering the house, he sighs, perhaps, and remarks that he is in a trying position. The parents inquire what the matter is, and he answers with a couplet:

[539]

"Give me a white pullet,
And I shall feel better."

[1] See Chapter XXVII, pp. 288, ff.

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Many are the poems that are chanted during the nights of the funeral-feasts. The Karen divide them into various groups, such as the great poems ("hta do"), which are their nearest approach to our classical epics; the small poems ("hta hpo"), which are less dignified than the former; the poems of hades ("hta plü"), in which the words and sentiments are often in keeping with the character of the deceased, praising the respected and condemning the dishonored; poems showing Death the way back to his abode ("hta thwe plü"); poems for the king of hades, in which his name, "Hkü Hte," is mentioned in every line, while in one ("hta yeh law plü") of this group the Karen name for hades is as often repeated; extempore verses ("hta na do") sung in rhyming contests on the last night of the funeral-feasts between the most skillful improvisers of the companies from the different villages represented, and, finally, the love poems, in which the story of the romance between the lover and the maiden is chanted by the leaders of the groups of the young people.

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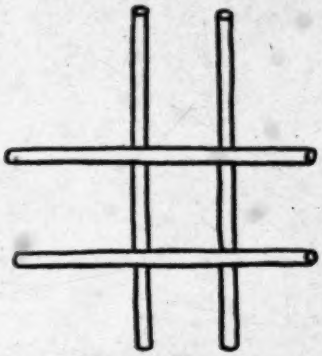
The funeral observances held during the daytime are as boisterous as those held at night. Several of the former consist of jumping the pestles ("ta se kle"). The pestles are the stout sticks with which the hulls are pounded from the rice in wooden mortars, but bamboos are frequently substituted for these in the jumping games about to be described. Four of the pestles or bamboos are placed on the ground in the manner indicated by the accompanying illustration, and four young men take their stations on the sides of the figure thus formed, grasping the ends of the sticks. Three times in succession they knock the pestles on the ground and the fourth time they knock them together. While this is going on a fifth young man jumps in between the projecting ends of the parallel sticks, first on one side, then on another, and the fourth time into the center of the square and out again, if possible, before they are clashed together. The game requires quickness of action and produces great merriment, especially when the jumper's feet are caught. Should they be caught, his failure to



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long ago, because some of those present expressed a decided preference for the musical tones of this drum over those of other drums belonging to members of neighboring villages.

Although many who took part in some of the old funeral celebrations were undoubtedly under the influence of liquor and in a corresponding state of hilarity, funerals do not seem to have become the occasion of feuds or even of drunken brawls. Young people came together on more intimate terms at funerals than was permitted at other times, and some of their poems would not bear reproduction in print. Probably at times their conduct also went beyond the bounds of propriety, but such lapses seem to have been rare and bitterly regretted. However, it is clear that Karen mourners succeeded in drowning their sorrow and believed that by means of their festivities they had sent the spirit of their dead rejoicing on its way to its future abode.

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Mount "Thaw Thi" also figures in some of the ancient folk-tales of the people. For example, one version of the story of the patriarch "Htaw Meh Pà" locates his home there. The den of the White Python is still pointed out on one side of the mount. It was to this den, according to the tale of "Ku Law Lay" and "Naw Mû E," that the fabulous serpent carried off the latter, whose husband dug holes there in trying to rescue her. These holes are also still shown.

When, in the middle of the nineteenth century, evangelists began to travel in the Toungoo district they discovered that the people living in the villages near Mount "Thaw Thi" indulged in various more or less elaborate rites on the peak. They had leaders or prophets in each village who interpreted the signs and set the time for the annual pilgrimage to the summit, where they sacrificed pigs and buffaloes, made offerings of wood and water, and built cairns of stones. A recent visitor to this spot reports that the cairns may still be seen, as also the broken pieces of the jars and bottles which once held the offerings; but that the paths are now overgrown, inasmuch as the former ceremonies have been long discontinued. Only a few old men recollect the pilgrimages to the summit made in their boyhood days. Some of these say that the people ascended the mountain to await there the appearance of the god, "Y'wa," in order that they might commune with him;[1] while others connect these rites with the Karen goddess, "Ta Là," who they say dwelt there and must be propitiated at her own shrine. That "Y'wa" was venerated on the mountain is confirmed by the following poem, which Dr. Mason found in Tavoy, more than three hundred miles from "Thaw Thi" itself:

[531]

"'Y'wa' will come and bring the great 'Thaw Thi'.
We must worship, both great and small,
The great 'Thaw Thi', created by 'Y'wa'.
Let us ascend and worship.
There is a great mountain in the ford.
Can you ascend and worship 'Y'wa'?
There is a great mountain in the way.
Can you go up and commune with 'Y'wa'?
You call yourselves the sons of 'Y'wa'.
How often have you ascended to worship him?
You claim to be the children of 'Y'wa'.
How many times have you gone up to worship 'Y'wa'?"

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That so conspicuous a peak as Mount "Thaw Thi" should have been regarded as the abiding-place of the great god, "Y'wa," and

[1] Rev. E. W. Blythe, of Toungoo, in *The Rangoon Diocesan Magazine*, (1917) Vol. XXI, No. 11, pp. 26, ff.

19: Marshall 14-5 (ca. 1918) 1922 APT Burma
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willed persons been able to resist their magic, but also in some instances have put the magic-workers to death. These "wi" are not supposed to be easily persuaded into exercising their sinister influence. It is said that they reserve their offices for the client who has suffered a real injury, or one whose distress is revealed by his tears, or one against whom seven malicious attempts have been made. Usually they are men of high-strung nervous temperament. Occasionally, other persons think themselves possessed of magic power ("pgha pgho") and try to use it for good or ill in influencing their own or some one else's life. However, a casual practitioner of the art must observe proper reticence in regard to such matters, or run the risk of falling into disrepute or of exciting the envy of some more experienced "wi." Many persons living in Karen villages at the present time are usually spoken of not as "wi," but as "k' thi thra" ("medicine-teachers" or doctors). They are very backward about referring to their art.

A class of persons supposed in the early days to be gifted with magical powers, consisted of the orphans and other unfortunates who were driven from the villages and compelled to live by themselves in the jungle.[1] In Karen folk-lore many tales recount episodes in which an orphan exercises his uncanny powers, usually in defense of some weaker person whom he saves or helps to get the better of his foes. One such story tells of a chief whose village had been raided again and again. Having no orphan magician at hand to aid him, he was beaten every time; while the victorious villages were every one of them blessed in having such a champion. The chief, anticipating another raid, sent his daughter away because he had no one else to give in ransom, should he be vanquished again. She ran through the jungle until she fell exhausted, and next morning was found by an orphan, one of seven brothers, near whose hut she had fallen. She related her story to the aged grandmother of the seven, and they were so captivated by her that they determined to aid her father in recovering the bronze drums and other treasure that he had surrendered, in order to save his village from destruction. Before the grandmother would consent to her grandsons' enterprise, she required them to make a trial of their strength. This they did by each catching a tusker elephant in the jungle, grasping him by the fore and hind legs and using him as a huge kind of battering-ram in knocking down a clump of bam-

[1] See pp. 133, 134.

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736 boos. Quite satisfied with this demonstration of their magic
789 power, the grandmother allowed them to go on their mission. In
538 the battle that followed the seven orphans severally engaged the champions of the seven victorious villages and won back for the maiden's father the treasure that he had been forced to pay over in the previous raids. The oldest of the brothers then received the hand of the chief's daughter in marriage, having cleared himself of the curse that had rested upon him as an orphan.

Why such extraordinary powers have been attributed to the once despised orphan is not known. At first he was feared for the bad luck he might bring to the other inhabitants of the village, if allowed to remain within the stockade. That he did not perish as an outcast in the jungle must have been regarded as a sort of miracle by the village community, whose members had always lived and worked together in close interdependence. They must have looked upon him with awe and believed that he was protected by some powerful influence, not only from the evilly disposed "Bgha" but also from the dangers of the forest. It was, therefore, natural enough to regard him in course of time as a person who had "pgho." In these later days orphans appear to have been considered less extraordinary persons, as indicated by the following couplet:

[539] "In olden times the orphans had magic.
Orphans now must talk" [like other persons].

741 The "k' thi thra" or "medicine-teachers" constitute another
753 group that should be mentioned among magic-workers. It is true
757 that they possess a rude knowledge of the efficacy of roots and herbs, but they also sometimes dispense disgusting and filthy concoctions. The Karen, like other primitive peoples, regard sickness as due to some mysterious force or "mana" and believe that all medicine, even that prescribed by European physicians, operates to dispel or vanquish this force. They expect a dose to cure immediately and discredit a medicine that must be taken repeatedly. Hence, in general, they prefer their native "medicine-teacher" and his nostrums to the educated physician and his medicine, the therapeutic effects of which are beyond their understanding. Doubtless, some Karens do distinguish between the charm and the drug, but most of them seem to cling to the idea that the drug has more or less of the charm connected with it.

789 Magic among the Karen, as among other primitive races, is divisible into white and black magic. The former is the beneficent